

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 05972 01 OF 02 081246Z
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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 5972

EXDIS

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PERP, PBOR, IS, LE, US
SUBJ: ISRAELI INTENTIONS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON: SECURITY, THE GOOD
FENCE, MAJOR HADDAD AND OTHER IMPONDERABLES

REF: (A) BEIRUT 2360, (B) TEL AVIV 4871, (C) JERUSALEM 1228,
(D) AMMAN 3892, (E) TEL AVIV 5943

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. THE ISRAELIS CONSIDER THE THE ISSUES OF
TOTAL IDF WITHDRAWAL FROM SOUTH LEBANON, THE FUTURE OF THE
CHRISTIANS AND THE GOOD FENCE AS SOMETHING OF A PACKAGE DEAL
OF THEIR OWN. FURTHERMORE, THEIR PUBLIC LINE IS THAT THE
IDF WILL REMAIN IN ITS PRESENT DEPLOYMENT IN THE SOUTH UNTIL
ASSURED THAT UNIFIL HAS THE TROOPS AND THE DEMONSTRATED WILL
TO BAR ARMED PALESTINIANS FROM OPERATING SOUTH OF THE LITANI.
IF WE ARE TO SUCCESSFULLY PUSH THE GOI INTO CARRYING OUT
ITS COMMITMENT TO EARLY TOTAL WITHDRAWAL, THERE IS GOING
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 TEL AV 05972 01 OF 02 081246Z

TO HAVE TO BE AT LEAST THE OUTLINE OF AN INTERIM SOLUTION
FOR THE SOUTH WHICH TAKES ACCOUNT OF THEIR CONCERNS.
MEANWHILE, WE SEEM AS FAR AWAY AS EVER ON THE OTHER KEY PART
OF THE PUZZLE -- A LEBANESE CENTRAL AUTHORITY WHICH WILL
BE ABLE TO REESTABLISH ITSELF IN THE SOUTH AND BE ACCEPT-
ABLE TO BOTH CHRISTIANS AND SHIA. ONLY SUCH AN AUTHORITY
WILL BE ABLE -- BY DEALING WITH THE ISRAELIS ON OUTSTANDING

ISSUES -- TO HAVE HADDAD AND SHIDIAC REMOVED FROM THE SCENE. WE SEE NO REAL EVIDENCE YET THAT THE GOL HAS THE ABILITY TO ESTABLISH SUCH A PRESENCE OR TO COME TO GRIPS WITH DEALING WITH THE ISRAELIS, AND THE U.S. CAN DO LITTLE TO INFLUENCE THAT SITUATION, THOUGH UNIFIL MAY PROVE TO HAVE MORE PRACTICAL INFLUENCE BY PROVIDING AN ACCEPTABLE INSTITUTIONAL BUFFER BETWEEN DEFIANT ISRAELIS AND FEARFUL LEBANESE. THE RESULT, FOR THE NEAR TERM, COULD BE NO CHANRE, DESPITE BEGIN'S ASSURANCES, THOUGH HE WILL FEEL STRONGLY COMMITTED TO LIVE UP TO THEM. THE IDF PRESENCE IN THE SOUTH AY STILL ENDURE FOR A MATTER OF MONTHS -- NOT WEEKS OR DAYS. END SUMMARY.

2. WE AGREE WITH EMBASSY BEIRUT THAT ISRAELI GOALS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON ARE SECURITY AND INFLUENCE. HOWEVER, WE DOUBT THAT THE TWO ARE AS DICHOTOMOUS AS SUGGESTED IN REF A. IN TRYING TO INFLUENCE ISRAELI ACTIONS, WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THE TWO ARE INTERLINKED IN THEIR MINDS. IF A LASTING SETTLEMENT IN THE SOUTH IS TO BE ACHIEVED, IT MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THEIR CONCERNS. AS WEIZMAN REITERATED (REF C), THE ISSUES OF TOTAL IDF WITHDRAWAL, THE FUTURE OF THE CHRISTIANS AND THE GOOD FENCE ARE RELATED.

3. WHEN ISRAELI POLICY CONFLICTS WITH U.S. GOALS, SUCH AS THEIR EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN AN OPEN-ENDED IDF PRESENCE ACROSS THE BORDER AND IN THE CHRISTIAN ENCLAVES, WE SHOULD
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PAGE 03 TEL AV 05972 01 OF 02 081246Z

CONTIN UE TO SAY SO TO THE GOI IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS. AS FOR THE FUTURES OF HADDAD AND CO., THIS APPEARS TO US TO BE A MANAGEABLE PROBLEM WHICH CAN BE WORKED OUT BETWEEN THE ISRAELIS AND LEBANESE UNDER THE ILMAC OR SOME OTHER MECHANISM. HOWEVER, WE ARE NOT PERSUADED THAT THERE IS ANY MORAL IMPERATICE FOR CLOSING THE GOOD FENCE. AS WE SEE IT, WE WILL GET NOWHERE WITH THE ISRAELIS IF WE ASK THEM TO FACILITATE HADDAD AND SHIDIAC'S EXTENDED VACATION FROM SOUTH LEBANON AND AT THE SAME TINE COME OUT AGAINST THE GOOD FENCE; NOR IS THERE ANY OBVIOUS NEED TO FACE THE ISSUE SO LONG AS UNIFIL IS THE ONLY EFFECTIVE FORCE AVAILABLE TO MAN THE BORDER POINTS IF AND WHEN THE IDF COMPLETES ITS WITHDRAWAL. MOREOVER, THE GOL WILL NEED THE ACTIVE SUPPORT OF THE CHRISTIANS IN THE SOUTH IF IT IS TO REASERT ITSELF IN THE REGION; CLOSING THE GOOD FENCE DOES NOT SEEM THE BEST WAY FOR THE GOL TO REACH THAT OBJECTIVE. FINALLY, USG POLICY FAVORS OPEN BORDERS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. PRESSURING THE ISRAELIS (WITH LITTLE HOPE OF SUCCESS) IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION WOULD, IN OUR JUDGMENT, NOT SERVE ANY U.S. INTEREST.

4. THE GOI IS DETERMINED THAT THE GOOD FENCE CONCEPT

SHALL BE MAINTAINED. INDEED, WE BELIEVE THE ISRAELIS INTEND TO EXPAND THE NUMBER OF CONTROLLED ENTRY POINTS IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE SHIA PARTICIPATION, AS WELL AS CONTINUED ACCESS TO THE CHRISTIANS. WE ANTICIPATE THAT THE CONTINUED OPERATION OF THESE ACCESS POINTS WILL BE ONE OF THE CONDITIONS FOR TOTAL IDF WITHDRAWAL. NOTWITHSTANDING A U.S. PREFERENCE THAT THE GOL BE ABLE TO EXERCISE FULL SOVEREIGNTY IN ALL ITS TERRITORY, THE FACT REMAINS THAT IT IS LEBANESE CIVILIANS WHO DESIRE TO ENTER ISRAELI TERRITORY, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND. THEY SEEK JOBS, GOODS AND SERVICES IN ISRAEL WHICH ARE NOT AVAILABLE IN LEBANON. THE GOOD FENCE GREW OUT OF THE DISINTEGRATION OF GOL AUTHORITY IN 1975-76 AND THE ISOLATION OF THE CHRISTIANS IN THE SOUTH. THE ISRAELIS DID NOT CREATE THIS
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 TEL AV 05972 01 OF 02 081246Z

SITUATION, ALTHOUGH THEY RECOGNIZED ITS INHERENT ADVANTAGES FOR CEMENTING AN ALLIANCE WITH THE CHRISTIANS. THE GOOD FENCE IS ANOTHER OF THE DEVELOPMENTS WHICH FLOWED FROM THE CIVIL WAR WHICH WILL REQUIRE PRACTICAL RATHER THAN LEGALISTIC TREATMENT.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 05972 02 OF 02 081319Z
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 5972

EXDIS

5. THE PART OF SOUTHERN LEBANON WHICH CONTINUES TO BE OCCUPIED BY ISRAEL DOES NOT PROTECT NORTHERN ISRAEL FROM ARTILLERY OR ROCKET ATTACK (I.E., 10-11 KM KATUSHA ROCKET RANGE). THE IDF CAN RESPOND BY FIRE BUT THE MILITARY RESULTS (AS EVIDENCED BY THEIR INITIAL INCURSION) ARE VERY POOR AND THE PROSPECT OF HITTING CIVILIANS, OR BEING ACCUSED OF HITTING CIVILIANS, IS HIGH. THE IDF PRESENCE DOES PROVIDE A REASONABLE DEGREE OF SECURITY AGAINST PALESTINIAN INFILTRATION INTO NORTHERN ISRAEL. HOWEVER, IF THE PALESTINIANS DO ATTEMPT TO INFILTRATE, THE IDF CANNOT RESPOND ON THE GROUND WITHOUT PUSHING UNIFIL ASIDE, A MOVE SURE TO CAUSE ADVERSE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE. HOWEVER ONE LOOKS AT THE EXISTING SITUATION, THE ISRAELI SECURITY DILEMMA HAS NOT BEEN SUBSTANTIVELY ALTERED BY THE IDF INCURSION.

6. THE CURRENT ISRAELI PUBLIC LINE IS THAT THE IDF WILL
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PAGE 02 TEL AV 05972 02 OF 02 081319Z

STAY IN SOUTHERN LEBANON UNTIL ASSURED THAT UNIFIL HAS THE TROOPS AND THE DEMONSTRATED WILL TO BAR ARMED PALESTINIANS FROM OPERATING SOUTH OF THE LITANI. THE GOI CONTINUES TO INSIST THAT IT HAS NO TERRITORIAL EXPANSIONIST INTENTIONS. THE QUESTION IS, THEREFORE, THE TERM OF CONTINUED PRESENCE. OUR ESTIMATE IS THAT IT MAY WELL ENDURE FOR A MATTER OF MONTHS RATHER THAN WEEKS OR DAYS, DESPITE BEGIN'S CLEAR COMMITMENT. EXACTLY HOW LONG DEPENDS A GREAT DEAL ON THE UNIFIL RESPONSE TO ANTICIPATED PALESTINIAN TESTS OF THAT ORGANIZATION AND UPON WORKING OUT WITH UNIFIL AN ACCEPTABLE, PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENT FOR THE GOOD FENCE.

7. HADDAD AND THE OTHER CHRISTIAN NOTABLE OF SOUTH LEBANON, CAPTAIN SHIDIAC, CONTINUE TO BE THORNS IN EVERYONE'S SIDE. ALTHOUGH OPPOSED TO UNIFIL OPERATION IN THEIR AREAS, THEY, SOMEWHAT PARADOXICALLY, HAVE LITTLE RETICENCE IN REQUESTING THAT UNIFIL STOP PALESTINIAN FIRE AGAINST THE ENCLAVES. THEY ARE IN VERBAL IF NOT AS YET ACTUAL CONFLICT WITH THEIR SHIA NEIGHBORS. BEIRUT NOT SUCCEEDED IN ESTABLISHING ANY SEMBLANCE OF CONTROL OVER THEM, IF INDEED IT HAS EVER TRIED. THE ISRAELIS ATTEMPT TO CONTROL HADDAD, BUT THEIR EFFORTS ARE COMPLICATED BY OFFICIAL GOI SUPPORT FOR THE CHRISTIAN CAUSE AND POPULATION. UNIFIL DOESN'T LIKE THE ARMED CHRISTIANS RUNNING AROUND AND WOULD LIKE TO DISARM THEM. HOWEVER, HADDAD (AND THE ISRAELIS) ASK WHY THE CHRISTIANS SHOULD BE DISARMED WHEN ARMED PALESTINIANS ENGAGE IN FIREFIGHTS

WITH UNIFIL TROOPS, CONFRONT UNIFIL AT KAWKABA AND WANDER
ABOUT TYRE AT WILL.

8. WE ARE IN ACCORD WITH EMBASSY BEIRUT THAT THE ONLY
VIALE LONG-TERM ANSWER MUST BE THE REESTABLISHMENT OF
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PAGE 03 TEL AV 05972 02 OF 02 081319Z

LEBANESE CENTRAL AUTHORITY IN THE SOUTH WHICH IS ACCEPT-
ABLE TO BOTH SHIA AND CHRISTIAN. ONLY SUCH AN AUTHORITY
WILL BE ABLE--BY DEALING WITH THE ISRAELIS ON OUT-
STANDING ISSUES--TO HAVE HADDAD AND SHIDIAC ASSIGNED
ELSEWHERE, PERHAPS AS STUDENTS OR ATTACHES ABROAD. WE
SEE NO EVIDENCE THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON HAS AS YET
THE ABILITY TO ESTABLISH SUCH A PRESENCE OR TO COME TO
GRIPS WITH DEALING WITH THE ISRAELIS. THE USG CAN DO
LITTLE TO INFLUENCE THAT SITUATION, THOUGH UNIFIL MAY
BE ABLE TO BY OFFERING AN ACCEPTABLE INSTITU-
TIONAL BUFFER. THE RESULT, FOR THE NEAR TERM, COULD WELL
BE NO CHANGE. HADDAD AND SHIDIAC WILL REMAIN. THE
ISRAELIS WILL ATTEMPT TO MEND THE SHIA-CHRISTINA RELATIONS
OR, AS EVIDENCED BY THEIR DIVISION OF THE AREA INTO IDENTI-
FIED PAROCHIAL SEGMENTS, TO CREATE BOUNDARIES OF INFLUENCE.
BUT BEGIN HAS COMMITTED THE GOI TO WITHDRAW, AND EVEN-
TUALLY THEY WILL - FOR BEGIN LOOKS ON HIS OWN PERSONAL
COMMITMENTS AS NEAR HOLY WRIT.
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